

Pakistan to confer highest civilian award on Dr Mahathir

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From Kamarul Ariffin Md Yassin

ISLAMABAD, March 20 (Bernama) -- Pakistan will confer the *Nishan-e-Pakistan* or Order of Pakistan, the country's highest civilian award, on Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad during his official three-day visit to Pakistan beginning Thursday.

The award is to be bestowed on Dr Mahathir for his contributions to the United Nations (UN), Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and ASEAN, Malaysia's High Commissioner to Pakistan Ikram Mohammad Ibrahim said here Wednesday.

He said Pakistan President Arif Alvi will present the award to Dr Mahathir when the latter pays a courtesy call on the President at the Aiwan-e-Sadr Presidential Palace on the second day of the visit.

On the morning of the second day, Dr Mahathir will be accorded an official welcome at the Prime Minister's House. Dr Mahathir will be welcomed by Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan.

"After that, the two prime ministers will have a four-eyed meeting, which will be followed by a delegation meeting between Malaysia and Pakistan," Ikram told Malaysian journalists at the Malaysian High Commission here.

The meetings will provide the opportunity for the two sides to evaluate their bilateral relations and identify other areas of cooperation that can be explored for mutual benefit, he said.

Dr Mahathir and Imran Khan are also expected to discuss and exchange views on regional and global issues, he added.

Ikram said that also on the second day, the two prime ministers will witness, at a hotel here, the symbolic groundbreaking for a Proton plant in Sindh province.

“At an event at the hotel, the two prime ministers will attend a roundtable with the captains of industry of Malaysia and Pakistan.

“They will also witness the signing of memorandums of understanding and cooperation between Malaysian and Pakistan companies,” he said.

Ikram said that on the third day, Dr Mahathir will attend the Pakistan Day 2019 parade at Shakar Parian here.

“Dr Mahathir has been invited by Prime Minister Imran Khan as the guest-of-honour at the event which is observed on March 23 every year,” he said.

This is Dr Mahathir’s first visit to Pakistan since becoming Malaysia’s seventh prime minister . When he was prime minister for the first time, he had visited Pakistan thrice, in 1984, 1997 and 2002.

This year also marks the 62nd anniversary of Malaysia-Pakistan diplomatic relations. Pakistan is Malaysia’s third largest trading partner in South Asia.

Bilateral trade stood at RM5.91 billion last year, a 2.5 per cent increase as compared to RM5.76 billion in 2017.

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